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Get Screened During Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

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By Cmdr. Jim Keck, Naval Hospital Jacksonville family medicine physician



Cmdr. Jim Keck, Naval Hospital family physician, explains to patient, Jessie Kemp, some prevention techniques to prevent colon cancer. March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, and a good time to learn more about colorectal cancer and how it can be prevented or best treated. (U.S. Navy photo by J. Sippel/Released).

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, so it's a good time to get familiar with this disease and how you can prevent it. Colorectal cancer affects the colon or rectum—the lower part of your digestive system. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), among cancers that affect both men and women, colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. It's expected that in 2013, there will be about 142,000 new cases of colorectal cancer, claiming more than 52,000 lives.

All men and women age 50 and over are at risk and should be screened. Some people are at higher risk and should be screened earlier, including those with inflammatory bowel disease, a personal or family history of colorectal cancer or polyps, or certain genetic syndromes.

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Colorectal cancer often has no symptoms. But symptoms can include stomach discomfort that doesn't go away, blood in your stool (bowel movement), or unexplained weight loss.

A number of factors have been shown to reduce your risk of developing colorectal cancer. You can support your health by eating more whole grains, fruits and vegetables; increasing your physical activity; and limiting alcohol intake. And if you smoke, stop.

And the good news is, early detection makes a difference. Screening includes things like colonoscopy and sigmoidoscopy—where a lighted instrument is used to examine your colon, and any growths can be checked or removed. When diagnosed in its early stages, colorectal cancer can be cured in up to 90 percent of people.

Screening for colorectal cancer saves lives. If you're age 50 or above, get screened and take control of your health!

For more information on colorectal cancer awareness month and screening information, check out the CDC's page [here](#).

Naval Hospital Jacksonville's priority since its founding in 1941 is to heal the nation's heroes and their families. The command is comprised of the hospital, located aboard Naval Air Station Jacksonville, and five branch health clinics in Florida (Jacksonville, Key West and Mayport) and Georgia (Albany and Kings Bay). To find out more, visit the command website at www.med.navy.mil/sites/NavalHospitalJax, like the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/NavalHospitalJacksonville, follow on Twitter at www.twitter.com/NHJax and view the YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/user/NavalHospitalJax. Sign up for email updates at nhjaxconnect@med.navy.mil.

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